

Gettysburg National Military Park - Cyclorama Building Background

In 1999, the National Park Service (NPS) approved a General Management Plan for Gettysburg National Military Park (NMP) that addressed demolition of the Cyclorama building as part of a long-term plan to rehabilitate the North Cemetery Ridge to its historic 1863 battle and 1864-1938 commemorative-era appearance.

The 1962 Cyclorama building, designed by noted architect Richard Neutra, was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The adverse effect of demolishing the building was addressed in a 1999 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the NPS, the State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. All mitigation in the MOA has been completed.

In 2006, the NPS was sued by the Recent Past Preservation Network and two individuals challenging the government's compliance with both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in making the decision to demolish the Cyclorama building. The U.S. District Court found that the NPS had complied with NHPA but not NEPA and directed the NPS to undertake a "site-specific environmental analysis on the demolition of the Cyclorama Center" and to consider "non-demolition alternatives" to its demolition before "any implementing action is taken on the Center."

Accordingly, the NPS initiated an environmental assessment (EA).

The Environmental Assessment planning process - The park prepared the EA with assistance from the regional office and with input from the Northeast Regional Solicitor's Office and the WASO Environmental Quality Division. The EA evaluated three alternatives: the NPS preferred alternative to demolish the building; another action alternative to allow a third-party to relocate the building outside park boundaries; and the no action alternative to mothball the building in place.

The EA was released for a 30-day public review and comment period that ended on September 21, 2012. Over 1,600 pieces of correspondence were received on the EA. The majority of commenters supported demolition of the building in order to rehabilitate the battle and commemorative landscapes. All substantive comments have been addressed in consultation with the regional office and the Northeast Regional Solicitor's Office.

No changes to the NPS preferred alternative were warranted as a result of public comment.

Next Steps - Gettysburg Foundation has funds for the demolition of the building and for most of the rehabilitation of Ziegler's Grove. The first steps in the project will be several weeks of asbestos remediation.

Once the building is demolished, the battle and commemorative-era landscapes will be rehabilitated according to the treatment recommendations contained in the 2004 cultural landscape report (CLR) for the North Cemetery Ridge area which include returning monuments to their historic locations, rebuilding commemorative pedestrian pathways and rebuilding historic fences.

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